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A triple conjunctive use cover.

Letter dated "Cleveland July 31, 1844". The Wells' Letter Express rate to New York City was prepaid with the Letter Express adhesive which cost ten cents. The postage was divided equally between Wells and Pomeroy's Letter Express. Wells carried the letter to Buffalo and from there Pomeroy carried it to New York City. Wells applied the Pomeroy adhesive to pay Pomeroy. Pomeroy had an arrangement with Boyd's Local Post to deliver letters to street addresses.

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Understanding Independent Mail Mixed Frankings

By
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A *mixed-franking* cover bears stamps of two or more postal administrations. Across a wide range of countries and specialized collecting areas, mixed-franking covers are highly prized. However, the different functions of mixed frankings are not generally well understood. The purpose of this article is to explain Independent Mail mixed frankings and to define them according to the categories applied to all mixed frankings. The covers discussed in this article are historically significant, because they are the earliest examples of mixed frankings in the world. To the author's knowledge, none exist from anywhere else prior to 1844.

Mixed frankings are categorized according to the stamps' relative functions and sequence of application. Years ago, Edwin Mueller devised a complex classification system for mixed frankings. He included everything from mixed-denomination and mixed-issue frankings to multi-country frankings. Collectors tend to place the greatest value on covers with stamps of two or more countries, which in combination pay the postage needed to convey the letter (without a forwarding or penalty charge).



Figure 1. Probably the best-known of all Independent Mail covers, this is the only recorded cover with adhesive stamps of three different firms: in sequence, Wells' Letter Express (three 5c Black on Green), Pomeroy's Letter Express (two 5c Black on Yellow) and American Letter Mail Co. (one 5c Large Eagle).

For the purpose of analyzing Independent Mail mixed frankings, the Mueller classification can be pared down to three basic groups:

Group I—stamps of two or more postal administrations paying their respective portions of a total postage rate.

For example, the combination of stamps of Great Britain and Cuba to pay internal Cuban postage and the British Post Office rate to the destination.

Group II—stamps of two or more postal administrations, with the secondary franking(s) applied by the first postal administration to credit the second postal administration with a portion of the original postage paid.

For example, the combination of a 13c Hawaiian Missionary (paying 5c Hawaiian postage, 2c ship fee and 6c United States postage) with a pair of United States 3c 1851 stamps applied at the Honolulu post office. The 3c pair is effectively an accounting credit to the U.S. government for its 6c share of the 13c received by the Honolulu office when it sold the 13c Missionary stamp.

Group III—stamps of two or more postal administrations affixed at different times to pay either forwarding postage on a redirected letter or postage due on inbound mail.

For example, a cover mailed from London to New York with the one-shilling rate paid by a Great Britain stamp, then forwarded to another city with a United States 3c stamp.

Independent Mail Conjunctive Usage and Mixed Frankings

International mixed-franking covers combine two or more *postal administration's* stamps. Independent Mail mixed-franking covers combine the stamps of more than one *mail-carrying firm* (and its corresponding route). Before categorizing Independent Mail mixed frankings, it is helpful to study the circumstances in which a letter was handled by more than one firm during the journey from its origin to the final destination.

The network of railroad and waterway routes used by the Independents covered a vast territory, from Baltimore to Nova Scotia, and from New York City to Chicago. While some Independents competed for business along similar routes, there was broad cooperation to link routes between cities served by different companies.

A letter or cover, if carried by more than one firm, is known as a *conjunctive usage*. Some conjunctive usages represent a relationship between a feeder route served by a small firm or agent and a principal route operated by one of the large firms. For example, a letter from Maine to New York City might be carried to Boston by Jerome & Co., then by Hale & Co. along its principal southbound route. Jerome's role as an Independent Mail carrier was essentially dependent on Hale.

Other conjunctive usages reflect a relationship of equals among the major Independent Mail firms. For example, to carry a letter between New York City and Detroit, Pomeroy's Letter Express and Wells' Letter Express worked together, with Pomeroy carrying the mail between New York City and Buffalo, and Wells handling the mail between Buffalo and Chicago. The total postage was shared equally.

Mixed frankings on conjunctive-use Independent Mail covers are very rare. Group II mixed frankings, in which the secondary franking represents a credit, are the

norm. Very few covers meet the Group I requirement that each stamp pays its respective share of the total required postage. Before discussing a representative Group I cover, the author will analyze Group II mixed frankings that reflect the postage-sharing policy among Independent Mail firms. In the absence of business records, these covers help to shed light on the mechanics of the Independent Mails.

Group II Mixed Frankings—Stamps as Accounting Instruments

From the sender's perspective, choosing an Independent Mail firm to deliver the letter was a matter of the available options (based on the cities served), and the most convenient method of prepayment was the simplest. Therefore, when we look at the only-recorded triple-combination cover in Figure 1—the cover made famous by Elliott Perry and Richard Schwartz—it is better to start from the sender's perspective.

Figure 2 diagrams the order in which the stamps were applied. The three Wells' Letter Express stamps were applied *by the sender* in Cleveland on August 5, 1844. The advertised Wells rate from Cleveland to New Haven was 18³/₄c (paid by three oval stamps, which were sold for 20 per dollar). The sender did not affix the other stamps (Pomeroy and American Letter Mail), nor would he care about inter-company accounting between Wells and the other firms involved in delivery.

However, the Independent Mail firms had to have a practical arrangement for crediting portions of the total postage to partners who helped carry the letter. In the case of the triple conjunctive-use in Figure 1, Wells gave to Pomeroy a credit of 10c from the 15c by affixing two Pomeroy 5c stamps, which were cancelled "Cd." at one of Pomeroy's offices along the route. In turn, Pomeroy credited 5c to American for its NYC-New Haven portion of the route by affixing the Large Eagle stamp, which was left uncanceled (the "Paid" was applied by American). Obviously, to implement this credit arrangement, the cooperating firms had to buy stamps from one another.

Figure 2. How the stamps were applied and what they represent.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>① <u>3 x 5c Wells' Letter Express affixed by sender</u>
 15c total postage:
 5c for Wells (Cleveland to Buffalo)
 5c for Pomeroy (Buffalo to NYC)
 5c for American Letter Mail (NYC to New Haven)</p> | <p>② <u>10c credit to Pomeroy</u>
 <u>2 x 5c affixed by Wells</u>
 5c for Pomeroy (Buffalo to NYC)
 5c for American Letter Mail (NYC to New Haven)</p> |
|--|--|



- ③ 5c credit to American
1 x 5c affixed by Pomeroy
5c for American Letter Mail (NYC to New Haven)



Figure 3. Wells' Letter Express 10c Black on Scarlet used with Pomeroy's Letter Express 5c Black on Yellow. Sent from Cleveland to New York City and delivered by Boyd's to 163 Front Street on July 19, 1844.

The triple-combination cover in Figure 1 is a Group II mixed franking, because the Pomeroy and American Letter Mail Co. stamps were used to credit portions of the original postage paid. The sender's prepayment (three Wells' Letter Express stamps) represents the total postage rate. The two Pomeroy stamps (affixed by the Wells office) and one American Letter Mail Co. stamp (affixed by the Pomeroy office) represent credits from one firm to the other. The role of the second and third frankings is analogous to the Hawaiian Missionary and U.S. mixed-franking cover used as an example of a Group II mixed franking.

While the use of adhesive stamps to indicate inter-company credits appears cumbersome, it was an effective way to ensure that the correct amount was credited. It is important to remember that the Independent Mail rates were quoted in $6\frac{1}{4}$ c increments, based on the widely-circulating Spanish silver dollar, which was divided into pieces of eight ($12\frac{1}{2}$ c). Half of a piece-of-eight was called a *picayune*. The advertised rate of $18\frac{3}{4}$ c for a letter from Chicago to New York City could be paid in silver. However, to encourage prepayment and volume, the Independents sold stamps at the rate of 20 per dollar (5c each). The advertised $18\frac{3}{4}$ c rate could also be paid with three stamps, which would cost only 15c, saving the sender $3\frac{3}{4}$ c per letter. On such letters, the credits would have to reflect the *actual prepayment* (15c), not the rate in silver ($18\frac{3}{4}$ c). Using the other firms' stamps, which were also sold at the rate of 20 per dollar, ensured that the credits did not exceed the correct share of postage.

The cover in Figure 3 is a similar Group II mixed franking. The Wells' Letter Express rate to New York City was $12\frac{1}{2}$ c, but could be prepaid with one of Wells' circular stamps, which were sold for 10 per dollar (10c each). The prepaid postage was divided equally between Wells and Pomeroy's Letter Express. Only the Wells stamp was affixed by the sender. Wells carried the letter to Buffalo, and from there Pomeroy carried it to New York City. Wells credited Pomeroy by affixing the 5c Black on Yellow stamp. Both stamps were cancelled with pen marks.

Pomeroy had an arrangement with Boyd's local post to deliver letters to street addresses, which is reflected on the cover in Figure 3 by the Boyd markings. It is not known how Boyd was compensated for its service.

A True Group I Mixed Franking Cover

The cover in Figure 4 is an extremely rare Group I mixed franking with Independent Mail stamps. It is the "purest" form of mixed franking, because each stamp prepays a different component of the total rate required to deliver the letter from its origin to final destination.

There is no origin or date on the cover, but it was probably mailed from a location west of Albany, most likely Buffalo, in August 1844. The destination city is Newburyport, Massachusetts. Three different firms participated in carrying the letter: Pomeroy's Letter Express (from the origin to Albany), Hale & Co. (from Albany to Boston) and H. T. Crofoot's Newburyport Letter Office (from Boston to Newburyport). Crofoot was a Hale & Co. agent (beginning in August 1844) and was probably compensated out of Hale's share of postage.

How can we be sure that both stamps were affixed at the time of mailing? Remembering that the sequence of handling is Pomeroy to Hale, then Hale to Crofoot, the first stamp required would be Pomeroy's. Its placement to the left of and slightly overlapping the Hale stamp precludes the possibility that Hale's stamp was affixed after Pomeroy's. Whoever mailed the letter affixed the Hale and Pomeroy stamps, in that order, each of which paid its respective share of the conjunctive-use postage.

Pomeroy cancelled its stamp with the red "Cd" and applied the "Pomeroy's Mail" straightline. Hale & Co.'s Albany office applied its red oval handstamp at upper left and cancelled the Hale stamp with the red rectangular handstamp. Crofoot applied its blue oval handstamp.



Figure 4. A rare Group I mixed franking with Independent Mail stamps. The Hale & Co. and Pomeroy's Letter Express stamps were affixed at the same time by the sender. Each stamp pays an equal part of the postage.

In the case of the Group I mixed franking in Figure 4, we cannot know if the sender deliberately combined the Pomeroy and Hale stamps, indicating a remarkable familiarity with the Independent Mail process. Another possibility is that the sender travelled west with the Hale stamp and affixed it first, then purchased the Pomeroy stamp to make up the rate because there was no Hale office in the city of origin.

Other Independent Mail Conjunctive Usages and Mixed Frankings

Some conjunctive-use frankings are not mixed—that is, they do not involve stamps of two different firms—yet they represent prepayment that was to be divided between the cooperating Independents. Figure 5 is such a franking. The pair of



Figure 5. July 31, 1844, from Rochester N.Y. to Albany (by Pomeroy) and Albany to Boston (by Hale). The pair of Pomeroy's Letter Express 5c Blue pays 10c postage, which was divided between the two firms.



Figure 6. August 14, 1844, New York City to Buffalo (by Pomeroy) and Buffalo to Detroit (by Wells). Pomeroy's Letter Express 5c Lake prepays postage for the first leg of the trip. The "Collect 6" is Wells' share due from addressee.

Pomeroy's Letter Express 5c Blue pays 10c postage from Rochester N.Y. to Boston (July 31, 1844). Pomeroy carried the letter from Rochester to Albany, then Hale continued along its route from Albany to Boston. The red oval handstamp was applied by Hale's Albany office. The 10c was divided equally between the two firms, but a book-keeping measure was used instead of a mixed franking.

The cover in Figure 6 is an unusual prepaid/collect combination. Pomeroy carried the letter from New York City to its office in Buffalo. From there it was carried by Wells' Letter Express to Detroit. The sender affixed a Pomeroy 5c Lake stamp, which paid for the first leg of the trip. However, Wells had to collect its share of postage from the addressee. Because the discount for stamps (20 per dollar) did not apply, Wells wrote "Collect 6" for the postage due at the full rate.

The cover in Figure 7 (a front only) is the only double-rated franking among the four recorded combinations of Hoyt's Letter Express and Pomeroy's Letter Express stamps. In fact, Hoyt's stamps on cover are known only in conjunction with Pomeroy's stamps. The question raised by these mixed-franking covers is whether Hoyt charged postage in addition to Pomeroy's rates.

David Hoyt was Pomeroy's Rochester agent and started the Hoyt's Letter Express in July 1844. The firm carried mail along the Genesee Valley Canal and connected with Pomeroy for continuing service. Hoyt issued stamps, but few are known, and the latest usage is August 23, 1844, which indicates a brief period of use.

The double-rate mixed franking in Figure 7 proves that Hoyt's adhesive was a stamp of value rather than an advertising label, despite the absence of a denomination. There would be no point in affixing two ad labels (with a corresponding double Pomeroy franking). Hoyt's stamps must have represented prepayment. If Hoyt collected 10c from the sender, as evidenced by his stamps, then what purpose did the Pomeroy stamps serve? Do they represent an additional 10c postage? If not, what was their function and how was Hoyt compensated for them? This question is also posed by the other three Hoyt/Pomeroy mixed-franking covers, all of which are single rates.



Figure 7. Hoyt's Letter Express pair (top stamp has "Lettr" error) in combination with pair of Pomeroy's Letter Express 5c Blue, applied at Rochester N.Y. on a cover front to New York City, delivered by Boyd's on August 8, 1844.

One possible explanation is that Hoyt's stamps were initially sold by his offices along the canal to allow patrons to prepay Pomeroy's rates, but they were not accepted by Pomeroy's main office. When a letter was received at Hoyt's Rochester office with one of his Hoyt's Letter Express stamps, a corresponding Pomeroy stamp was affixed to ensure acceptance as a prepaid letter. As a Pomeroy agent, Hoyt received a free supply of Pomeroy stamps, thus it would be possible for him to apply them without incurring additional cost. If this theory is correct, then the mixed frankings on Hoyt/Pomeroy covers represent an unusual circumstance in which the secondary franking essentially validates the primary franking.



Figure 8. Sent by U.S. mail from Mt. Vernon, O., to Rochester, then forwarded to N.Y.C. by Pomeroy. U.S. rate was 37½c. Pomeroy 5c Blue pair pays 10c rate.

Figure 8 shows another unusual Pomeroy cover involving the Rochester office where David Hoyt was based. The sender mailed the letter on August 23, 1844, from Mount Vernon, Ohio, to Rochester. It was sent thru the U.S. post office and rated 37½c due (double the 18¾c rate). In Rochester the receiving party forwarded the letter to a firm in New York City, but opted to use Pomeroy instead of the post office. The double rate was paid by two 5c Blue stamps (the color consistently used at Rochester), and the letter was carried to New York City and delivered by Boyd's on August 31. This cover is a Group III mixed franking, involving the U.S. government mails and an Independent Mail firm for forwarding. It graphically demonstrates the contrast in rates between the post office (37½c) and Pomeroy (10c).

Conclusion

The short-lived Independent Mails provided numerous "firsts" in philately and postal history, including the *mixed franking*. Using Independent Mail covers, it is possible to show examples of the three basic categories of mixed franking. These unusual usages, all dating from 1844 and 1845, make a colorful introduction to the next half-century of international mails, in which mixed frankings were devised to satisfy complex arrangements for prepaying postage.